

THE
Design of Ba

A SERMON PREACHED

REV. HENRY

IN THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

ON THE EVENING

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER

On the Occasion of the Ordinance
Administered to Sever

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HURCH, SAINT PAUL,

E EVENING OF

VEMBER 21, 1875,

Ordinance of Baptism being
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THE DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

12 ch. *Exodus*, 26 v.—“ *What mean ye by this service ?*”

This is the Lord that is speaking to the children of Isreal during the time they were in Egyptian bondage. He is speaking to them through His servant, Moses, telling them what they must do to evade the destroying angel which should pass through Egypt and slay the first born of both man and beast. Hence we read the 21, 23 verses. Now this act—this most important event in connection with the deliverance of the children of Isreal from Egyptian bondage, was to be kept in perpetual remembrance. It was the Lord's will that it should so be—that their children and their children's children should know of the wonders which God had performed of old. Hence this direction is given to them. 24-28 vs.

It is not my purpose this evening to speak of the text in the connection with which it stands, but to take it as an enquiry into the meaning of that service which has brought us together more especially at this time. There is much ignorance, shall I say, (yes, the term is not too strong,) on the part of Christian people as to the design of the ordinance of baptism as instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism has been enjoined by the highest authority. Christ himself gave this commission to his disciples, just before he left earth for heaven: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Gost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” In accordance with this law of the Kingdom of Heaven, on the day of Pentecost, to those who inquired, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion, we are told: “And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized.” And then, on those Gentiles on whom the Holy Ghost fell, whose hearts had been changed by Divine grace, Peter said: “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized

in the name of the Lord." These with many other passages in the New Testament, show to us that baptism is not indebted for its origin to the decrees of popes or ecclesiastical assemblies—to the whims, vagaries, inventions or policy of uninspired, designing, or erring men. It is commanded by "the wisdom of God," instituted and submitted to by Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

I do not propose this evening entering into the discussion as to the *mode* in the administration of this ordinance, neither do I propose treating on the *subjects* fit for its attendance—we did that last Sunday evening, and by referring to the simple Word of God we found that believers *only* were baptized, and that "baptism" is a "burial" of the believer in water.

To-night I desire to direct your attention to

"THE DESIGN OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM."

If the Lord Jesus Christ gave the command for his disciples to be baptized he must have had some reason, desire, purpose for so doing.

I. What mean ye by this service? Has it anything to do with salvation?

To this we say emphatically, no. We regard baptism as a solemn and significant profession of discipleship to Jesus. But we do not regard baptism as an act by which we become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and heirs of everlasting life. We believe that faith, according to the Scriptures, is a pre-requisite to baptism; that we are justified by faith, that we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and that our views of the necessity of faith unto Scriptural baptism, whilst opposed by no part of Holy Writ, are affirmed or corroborated by every inspired precept and precedent. The great commission does not appear to us ambiguous in regard to the duty of baptizing disciples. "Go ye, therefore disciple all the nations, baptizing them." If a doubt should enter, another record is sufficient for its expulsion. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Apostolic injunctions and subsequent practice, as recorded in the inspired volume, perfectly coincide with our sentiments that discipleship is a pre-requisite to baptism, and is professed in baptism. Hence the command "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you. * * * Then, they that gladly received His word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. "Philip went down to the City of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women."

The Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians complains of the divided state in which they were in. Some of the members of the Church were glorying in Paul ; some in Apollos, some in Cephas, and some remained true to their baptismal vow, they gloried in Christ. This was the state of the Church when Paul wrote his epistle. Hence he says, 1, I Cor., 11-17 vs.

Now what I want to remark here is this, that notwithstanding the divided state of the Church in Corinth, if baptism had been essential to salvation we should never have had the Apostle Paul thanking God that he had baptized so few of them. He gives us the reason for this, "lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name."

He tells us, "I baptized Crispus and Gaius" and several others. But he baptized them not that they might repent but because they had repented ; not that they might pass into the kingdom of heaven, but because they had passed into the kingdom of heaven. Not that they might be incorporated into Christ, but because they had been incorporated, the members already of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. No fear have I of the statement that they arose and were baptized, and washed away their sins ; inasmuch as that baptismal washing away of sins was the act, not of unconverted and unpardoned ones, but of men and women who had already washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. To say of those who are in a state of nature (unsaved) that baptism saveth them, would be a mischievous and a monstrous falsehood. To say of those who are in a state of grace, that baptism saveth them, is a grand and glorious truth. The discipleship first, the badge of discipleship afterward. The surrender of the inner man in the exercise of faith, and then the surrender of the outer man in the act of baptism into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we believe that baptism has nothing whatever to do with salvation.

If, for instance, these friends who are to be baptized to-night are unsaved when they go down into the water, they will come up out of the water unsaved.

II. Then if baptism has nothing to do with salvation ; if salvation is requisite before this ordinance is administered, "what mean ye by this service ?"

(1). Baptism, according to the New Testament, appears to be an act of professed discipleship to Jesus, a practical declaration of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. By baptism we put on Christ who dwells within us, not thereby becoming His, for if we are not already in Him no outward rite will make us members of

His spiritual body ; but acknowledging that by faith we have already given ourselves to His service. Between the Church and the world there runs a river, which, though unseen, is both broad and deep ;—a river of human penitence ;—a river also of divine forgiveness, and on the farther bank He stands who is the Life of the Church, inviting the wordly and sinful, through many lips to plunge into the cleansing stream. Smitten with godly sorrow, lured to by faith by the gentle and inviting voice, our friends, like many before them, have leaped into and crossed the cleansing stream. This is the true spiritual baptism, the act of mingled penitence and faith with which the spiritual life begins, the act which brings us to the feet and service of Christ. So that baptism is a declaration that we are on the Lord's side ; and that it is our determined purpose to serve Him, to follow Him the remainder of our lives. We have entered into a covenant engagement with Him, and the language of each candidate who is baptized is this— at any rate it may be so interpreted—“ Let others do as they may, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

(2). Baptism is designed to represent the change that has taken place in its subjects—the change which is essential to the soul's salvation—the passing from death unto life—the new birth of which our Lord speaks. Baptism supposes the candidate's previous defilement by sin, and present death to sin ; whilst the washing away of sin is in baptism represented. Hence to Saul of Tarsus, it was said. “ Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord. We regard these words when compared with others, as teaching that the washing away of sins which is actually enjoyed by every obedient believer is symbolically represented in baptism. Baptism into Christ is baptism with a professing belief in Christ ; devotedness to Christ, and enjoyment of the favor of Christ.

Thus, according to a well-known phrase, which in the main I am ready to adopt, “ Baptism is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” It is neither the cause of the grace, nor the occasion of the grace, nor the means of the grace, but the sign of the grace. The thing signified having been wrought within the soul beforehand ; the new birth having been efficaciously originated “ not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

So that those who are to be baptized this evening will in the very act, virtually say to you, that they have experienced a change of heart ;— that, they can testify from personal knowledge that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Once they were in darkness, but now are they light in the Lord. Once they had no hope of heaven, but now

they have a good hope through grace, and are rejoicing in that hope. Once they lived to themselves, but now they live to Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. They testify in this very act to the faithfulness of God in forgiving all those who believe in his Son.

(3.) Baptism is designed to remind us of the believer's deadness to sin, and his purpose to walk in newness of life, and hence it is spoken of by the Apostle Paul as a burial and resurrection. I can understand how persons reading the New Testament without special care may come to the conclusion that as the Spirit of God descended on Christ at his baptism as he came up out of the water, and came with miraculous energy on Cornelius and other converts when they were baptized, therefore the effusion of the Holy Ghost is the distinctive feature of the ordinance, and may fitly be set forth by the effusion of water. But is this in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament? Where are we taught that baptism represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Nowhere that I know of. The spiritual meaning of baptism or the design of baptism sets forth a different truth. There are two passages in the New Testament in which the inward significance of this ordinance is plainly stated, and many other passages which allude to and confirm these two. The first is in the epistle to the Romans in which the apostle distinctly affirms that the reference of baptism is to the death and resurrection of Christ, and that its true inward meaning is that we die with Christ to sin, and rise with Him to walk in newness of life. Hence he says (Romans, 6 ch., 3-9 vs.) The second passage is in Colossians, 2 ch. 12 v., in which the apostle teaches the same truth, namely, that we are buried with Christ in baptism, and are risen with Him through that "faith which is of the operation of God." I see no way of evading the force of these passages. We are bound, I conceive, to take the apostolic interpretation of this apostolic ordinance. The apostle tells us that baptism is intended to remind us of Christ's death and resurrection, and to set forth our death to sin and our resurrection to holiness. To these truths the ordinance gives witness, the burial under the water and the rising from it setting them forth in an emphatic symbolism.

As in the sacramental supper we take the broken bread as an emblem of the Saviour's sufferings, and drink of the wine as an emblem of the Saviour's death, of His blood which was shed for the remission of sins. So, in baptism, the burial of the body in water is emblematic of the Saviour's burial; and the rising again, the lifting up of the body out of the water, is emblematic of the Saviour's resurrection. And by this act we declare to the world that we are dead to sin, the

past buried ; that we have done with it ; and that spiritually we are risen again and are walking in newness of life. When thus viewed, how beautiful and significant this ordinance becomes :

“ Sweet the sign that thus reminds me,
Saviour, of thy love for me ;
Sweeter still the love that binds me,
In its deathless bond to thee,
O, what pleasure,
Buried with my Lord to be ! ”

To recapitulate a little. What mean ye by this service? It has nothing to do with salvation—it neither contributes to, nor yet is it essential to salvation. It is a profession of attachment to the Saviour ; it is an outward declaration that our hearts have been changed by divine grace. It is a declaration that we are dead with Christ, and that we are risen again with him to walk in newness of life. This is what we mean by this service. Nothing more and nothing less.

It may be there are some present who do not agree with this view of the subject. To such I would say, read. Read very carefully the New Testament on the Ordinances. It may be, you have not thought on this subject in the way it has been presented to-night. I commend it, then, earnestly to your serious consideration. Take the New Testament, investigate its teachings, and know what the mind of the Spirit is.

You may ask, if baptism be not essential, and in no way contributes to salvation, is there any real benefit in connection with its observance? To this I answer yes ; and that in more ways than one. For baptism is enjoined by divine command on all who believe ; and no man ever kept a divine commandment without entering into a great reward. The sense of duty done braces and fortifies all the energies of spiritual life. It is impossible but that in an hour so solemn as this must be to those who are about to put on Christ, and by a public act, to which for weeks they have looked forward with thought and prayer, with strong desire, yet also with some natural fear and trembling—it is impossible, but that their faith should be fixed and strengthened, their hearts more than ever set on serving Him whom they love. Nor is it possible that those of you who believe but have not professed your faith should submit to this sacred and impressive ordinance without finding your spiritual affections quickened, energized and settled in a more steadfast bent on the Master whom you have so long grieved.

To those who view an observance of this ordinance slightly, I would remind them that Christian ordinances are designed for Christian people, for persons who are already saved by grace. But does it therefore follow that an ordinance established by Christ has no important end to answer, and may safely be despised? Our Lord, when he went to John for baptism : “ John forbade him saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us ” (the disciple as well as the Lord) “ to fulfill all righteousness.” If baptism is an insignificant ordinance, and if it may be neglected or altered, and

treated with contempt, because it will not save us, the Lord's Supper may for the same reason be held in the same estimation and treated with the same contumely.

Let us beware of disobedience to God from excuses that cannot be uttered at the great day of account. Let us, not in baptism only, but in everything we feel, we say, we do, beware of that which may clothe with shame and fill with confusion, when our character shall be impartially pronounced, and our condition irrevocably fixed.

In closing I would remind you of three essentials which are pre-requisite to the administration of this ordinance. (1). To see and feel that you are a sinner, and need the remission of sins. We preach to you the evil of sin. We tell you of its consequences here, and of its consequences in the world to come. Whether you believe it or not, we emphatically declare to you the statement of God's word, "that all men have sinned;" you are sinners—every one of you. I would that you all were truly conscious of your sinfulness, and desired remission. (2). The second pre-requisite to the administration of this ordinance is that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and rely on him as your Saviour. We preach to you Christ—Christ Jesus the Saviour of the world. We tell you what he has done in giving himself for a sinful world, and in His name we proclaim the blessings of salvation through faith, and through faith alone. I would that you should exercise this faith now. Believe and live. (3). The third essential as a pre-requisite to the administration of this ordinance is that you are willing to forsake all ungodliness and devote your life to the service of your Redeemer; that you should be willing, and not ashamed, to put on Christ and follow him to the skies. And are you not willing to do this? Will you not give up yourselves to the Lord Jesus—make an entire surrender?

"Humble souls who seek salvation,
Through the Lamb's redeeming blood,
Hear the voice of revelation,
Tread the path that Jesus trod.
Flee to him, your only Saviour,
In his mighty name confide;
In the whole of your behavior
Own him as your sovereign guide.

Hear the blest Redeemer call you,
Listen to his gracious voice;
Dread no ills that can befall you,
While you make his ways your choice.
Jesus says, "Let each believer
Be baptized in my name;"
He himself in Jordan's river,
Was immersed beneath the stream.

Plainly here, his footsteps tracing,
Follow him without delay;
Gladly his command embracing,
Your Forerunner leads the way.
View the rite with understanding;
Jesus' grave before you lies!
Be interred at his commanding,
After his example rise.

Bible Reading on the Subject of Christian Baptism.

The Mission, Preaching and Baptizing of John the Baptist ; 1c. Mark, 1-2 vs. 1c. John, 6-7 vs. 3c. Matthew, 1-12 vs. 3 John, 23 vs.

The Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ ; 3 Matthew, 13-17 vs. 3 Luke, 21-23 vs.

Christ Baptizing by his Disciples in Judea ; 3 John, 22 v. 26-30 vs. 4 John, 1-3 vs.

Christ represents his Sufferings under the Figure of Baptism ; 20 Matthew, 22-23 vs. 12 Luke, 50 v.

Christ's Commision to his Disciples ; 28 Matthew, 16-20 vs. 16 Mark, 15-16 vs.

The Baptism at the Feast of Pentecost ; 2 Acts, 37-47 vs.

Philip Baptizing in Samaria ; 8 Acts, 5-8 vs., 12-13 vs.

The Baptism of the Eunuch ; 8 Acts, 35-39 vs.

The Baptism of the Apostle Paul ; 9 Acts, 17-18 vs., 22 Acts, 14-16 vs.

The Baptism of Cornelius and his Friends ; 10 Acts, 42-48 vs.

The Baptism of Lydia and her Household, 16 Acts ; 13-15 vs. Lydia's household comforted by the word ; 16 Acts, 40 v.

The Baptism of the Philipian Jailor and his Household who were believers ; 16 Acts, 29-34 vs.

Paul Baptizing at Corinth ; 18 Acts, 4-8 vs. 1, I Corinthians, 13-17 vs. The Household of Stephanas addicted themselves to the Ministry of the Saints ; 16, I Corinthians, 15 v.

The mode and Design of Baptism ; 6 Romans, 3-5 vs., 2 Colossians 12 v.



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The Mission, Preaching and Baptizing of John the Baptist ; 1c. Mark, 1-2 vs. 1c. John, 6-7 vs. 3c. Matthew, 1-12 vs. 3 John, 23 vs.

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